

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 AID-20 EB-11 IO-14 ACDA-19 DRC-01 AF-10

EUR-25 /193 W
----- 115190

R 210600Z FEB 74
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2597
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPACREP CANBERRA
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CANBERRA 1019

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, AS
SUBJ: DFA EVALUATION OF WHITLAM VISIT TO SOUTHEAST ASIA,
JANUARY 28 TO FEBRUARY 13

REF: BANGKOK 2046 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: DFA REVIEWED WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY INGERSOLL FEB 20
ITS IMPRESSION OF VISIT TO SOUTHEAST ASIA BY PRIME MINISTER
WHITLAM, JAN 28 TO FEB 13. DFA FEELS VISIT WENT OFF WELL IN
EMPHASIZING CONTINUING AUSTRALIAN INTEREST IN AREA DESPITE CHANGES
IN FORM. CLEAR THAT LITTLE REAL PROGRESS MADE IN DEFINING FORM
AND DETAILS OF FUTURE REGIONAL ORGANIZATION WHITLAM HAS BEEN
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PUSHING FOR PAST YEAR. IN EMBASSY VIEW, WHITLAM VISIT BROUGHT OUT

BOTH BEST AND WORST IN HIS OUTLOOK, BUT WE NEED TO APPRECIATE BOTH ASPECTS IN OUR VIEW OF HIM. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING COURSE OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY INGERSOLL'S CALL AT AUSTRALIAN DEPT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS FEB 20, WOOLCOTT (DEPUTY SECRETARY) OFFERED TO GIVE HIS IMPRESSIONS OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN VISIT BY PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM. WOOLCOTT WAS MEMBER OF PARTY AND IS CLOSE TO WHITLAM. ALSO PRESENT AT MEETING WAS DR. PETER WILENSKI, WHITLAM'S PRINCIPAL PRIVATE SECRETARY, WHO EXPRESSED AGREEMENT WITH WOOLCOTT'S COMMENTS. WHITLAM WILL, NO DOUBT, REVIEW VISIT HIMSELF IN PARLIAMENT AFTER IT RECONVENES FEB 28, BUT WE BELIEVE FOLLOWING IS ESSENTIALLY VIEW HE WILL TAKE.

3. WOOLCOTT SAID THAT GOA HAD ENCOUNTERED FEELING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA THAT REGIONAL CONFIDENCE IN AUSTRALIA WAS BEING UNDERMINED. THIS WAS CONSEQUENCE OF SERIES OF DEVELOPMENTS, INCLUDING END TO MILITARY ROLE IN SOUTH VIET-NAM, ENDING MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO CAMBODIA, DECISION ON WITHDRAWAL OF AUSTRALIAN FORCES FROM SINGAPORE, AND CHANGED EMPHASIS ON SEATO (WHICH RESPONDED LARGELY TO AUSTRALIAN PRESSURE). WHITLAM SAW HIS PURPOSE IN VISIT AS TO REASSERT A STRONG, CONTINUING AUSTRALIAN INTEREST IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA. WHITLAM'S MESSAGE WAS INTENDED TO EMPHASIZE THAT CHANGES WERE NOT IN THE DEGREE BUT RATHER IN THE NATURE OF AUSTRALIA'S INTEREST IN THE AREA, SHIFTING FROM A FOCUS ON MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHERS THAT ARE MORE LASTING IN WHITLAM'S VIEW, INCLUDING AID, TRADE, AND CULTURAL CONTACTS. AUSTRALIA HAS JOINED MEDSEA, SEAMEO, ENTERED INTO CULTURAL AGREEMENTS WITH ALL COUNTRIES VISITED, UPDATED TRADE AGREEMENTS (EXCEPT WITH SINGAPORE, WHICH APPEARS NOT TO WANT TRADE AGREEMENT), AND HAS EXPANDED ITS SYSTEM OF TARIFF PREFERENCES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. WHITLAM FEELS THAT REAL MILEAGE HAS BEEN MADE ON TRADE SIDE.

4. WOOLCOTT SAID VISIT HAD GONE WELL IN MAKING POINT THAT AUSTRALIAN INTEREST CONTINUES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, BUT DIFFERENTLY ORIENTED THAN IN PAST. IN SOME AREAS, AUSTRALIAN POLICY DIFFERS FROM SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES (ON CAMBODIA, FOR EXAMPLE, BUT NONE OF COUNTRIES VISITED RAISED MATTER). MALAYSIA APPEARED THE CLOSEST TO AUSTRALIA. MALAYSIA IS MOVING FORWARD IN DEVELOPING ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRC, AND RELATIONS MAY BE ESTABLISHED BY

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MIDDLE OF 1974. IMPORTANT THING WAS THAT MALAYSIANS WANTED REASSURANCES ON KEEPING AUSTRALIAN MIRAGE FIGHTERS AT BUTTERWORTH BEYOND 1975. MATTER WAS LEFT OFFICIALLY THAT IT WOULD BE REVIEWED BY AUSTRALIAN CABINET IN MARCH, 1975. HOWEVER, WHITLAM LEFT IMPRESSION HE WOULD FAVOR EXTENSION OF STATIONING MIRAGES IN MALAYSIA. PRIME MINISTER RAZAK AND GHAZALI HAD MADE CLEAR THEY WANTED MIRAGES TO STAY. WILENSKI COMMENTED THAT SINCE MALAYSIANS ARE SEEKING TO DEVELOP THEIR AIR FORCE AND PROVIDING THIS

CONTINUES TO BE SEEN TO BE THEIR INTENTION, THERE IS EVERY BASIS FOR CONTINUED AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE TO THEM.

5. WOOLCOTT SAID THE GOA HAD KNOWN THAT SINGAPORE WOULD BE DIFFICULT. DIFFERENCES WITH SINGAPORE HAD BEEN WORKED ON AT OFFICIAL LEVEL PRIOR TO VISIT. LEE KWAN YEW WAS AWARE OF THESE EFFORTS, AND HIS CONCERN OVER IMPLICATIONS OF ENERGY CRISIS HAD ALSO TEMPERED HIS VIEWS ON RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA. LEE'S PUBLIC COMMENT THAT HE MAY HAVE BEEN MISTAKEN IN COMMENTS HE HAD MADE ABOUT AUSTRALIA IN THE PAST WAS ONE OF HIS FIRST PUBLIC ADMISSIONS OF ERROR. WOOLCOTT SAID HE DREW CONCLUSION THAT, ALTHOUGH LEE HAS CAPACITY TO INVOLVE HIMSELF IN AUSTRALIAN DOMESTIC POLITICS, LEE NO LONGER SEES THIS AS USEFUL. HE NOW ACCEPTS FACT THAT WITHDRAWAL OF AUSTRALIAN TROOPS FROM SINGAPORE IS IRREVERSIBLE FACT. HE KNOWS THAT AUSTRALIA WANTS SUBSTANTIAL RELATIONS WITH SINGAPORE AND THAT AUSTRALIA IS PROBABLY MORE IMPORTANT TO SINGAPORE THAN VICE VERSA.

6. REGARDING BURMA, AUSTRALIANS HAD IMPRESSION OF SOME POSSIBILITY OF MOVEMENT ON LIMITED FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND ON REGIONALISM-- INITIALLY IN SENSE OF ENLARGEMENT OF ASEAN FROM PRESENT FIVE MEMBERS TO 10 (WITH ADDITION OF FOUR INDOCHINA STATES AND BURMA) AND THEN TO FUTURE REGIONAL ASSOCIATION. NE WIN HAD POSED TWO CONDITIONS ON BURMESE JOINING BROADER REGIONAL ASSOCIATION: 1) CLOSING OUT OF AMERICAN BASES IN THAILAND AND 2) END TO OBSTACLE POSED BY FACT NUMBER OF OTHER COUNTRIES DO NOT YET HAVE RELATIONS WITH PRC.

7. AT END OF DISCUSSION, AT REQUEST OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY, WOOLCOTT REVIEWED STATE OF PLAY ON BROADER REGIONAL ASSOCIATION. HE SAID THAT CONCEPT OF REGIONAL ASSOCIATION HAD GOTTEN OFF TO FALSE START IN JAKARTA IN FEB, 1973, DUE TO UNFORTUNATE BRIEFING

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EUR-25 /193 W

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R 210600Z FEB 74
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
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TO PRESS BY INDONESIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MALIK. HOWEVER, THERE WERE USEFUL DISCUSSIONS ON CONCEPT OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATION. WOOLCOTT SAID THAT, ON ISSUE OF CHINESE PARTICIPATION, AUSTRALIA CONSIDERS THAT CHINA IS GREAT POWER BUT NOT SUPER POWER ON LEVEL OF U.S. AND SOVIET UNION AND SO COULD JOIN WITHOUT SWAMPING ORGANIZATION. BY SAME TOKEN, INDIAN PARTICIPATION DOES NOT SEEM DESIRABLE, SINCE ITS NUMBERS WOULD SWAMP ORGANIZATION.

8. COMMENT: WE MUCH APPRECIATE VERY FULL REPORTING ON WHITLAM VISIT BY OTHER EMBASSIES IN REGION, WHICH DONE ENTIRELY VOLUNTARILY. PERHAPS THIS IS RECOGNITION OF GROWING IMPRESSION IN REGION OF SIZE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF AUSTRALIA, EVEN IN THE NON-MILITARY ROLE WHICH WHITLAM HAS EMPHASIZED. AUSTRALIAN PRESS REPORTING ON VISIT HAS BEEN ALMOST NAUSEATINGLY LAUDATORY OF WHITLAM, LARGELY CONFIDENTIAL

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OBSCURING VERY REAL RESERVATIONS FELT ABOUT AUSTRALIA AND ABOUT BROADER REGIONAL ORGANIZATION IN AREA. ASSISTANT SECRETARY INGERSOLL HAD CLEAR IMPRESSION OF THESE RESERVATIONS DURING HIS RECENT TOUR OF REGION, WHICH INCLUDED ALL COUNTRIES WHITLAM VISITED.

9. IN TERMS OF MORE DIRECT INTEREST TO U.S., WHITLAM WAS BOTH AT HIS BEST AND AT HIS WORST DURING THE TRIP. HE WAS PROBABLY HELPFUL IN HIS PUBLIC REMARKS IN VIENTIANE, WHERE HE CALLED FOR AN END TO SOVIET, CHINESE AND U.S. MILITARY SUPPLIES TO INDOCHINA AND FOR WITHDRAWAL OF NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS FROM LAOS (WHICH WOULD INEVITABLY MEAN EFFECTIVE END TO CONFLICT THROUGHOUT INDOCHINA). HE WAS STATESMANLIKE IN HIS SPEECH TO SINGAPORE PRESS CLUB FEB 8 IN WHICH HE EMPHASIZED CONTINUITY OF AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND NEED TO LOOK TO FUTURE, RATHER THAN DWELL ON REPAIRING THE PAST. (TEXT BEING POUCHED TO EA/ANP). HE WAS CAREFUL IN HIS COMMENTS ON DIEGO GARCIA EXTENSIONS IN RANGOON, DECLINING TO SAY ANYTHING SUBSTANTIVE AND LIMITING HIMSELF IN SINGAPORE TO REPEATING

STATEMENT ISSUED BY DFA IN CANBERRA. WE KNOW HE WAS DEEPLY ANNOYED THAT HE LEARNED OF DIEGO GARCIA EXTENSION WHILE TRAVELLING AND ONLY SHORTLY IN ADVANCE OF PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT. HE WAS PROBABLY ALSO ANNOYED THAT IT WAS BRITISH EMBASSY RANGOON THAT BRIEFED HIM (AND PROBABLY NOT TOO WELL FROM SPARSE EVIDENCE WE HAVE). HE PREPARED CAREFULLY FOR THIS TRIP, ELICITING VIEWS AND SOMETIMES DRAFTS OF HIS SPEECHES FROM AUSTRALIAN MISSIONS. HIS CHIEF SPEECH WRITER, GRAHAM FREUDENBERG, VISITED COUNTRIES WELL IN ADVANCE OF WHITLAM FOR FURTHER REVIEW OF SPEECH DRAFTS.

10. WHITLAM WAS CERTAINLY AT HIS WORST IN HIS COMMENTS ON U.S. BASES IN THAILAND AND ON U.S. BOMBING OF HANOI (REFTEL) AT PRESS CONFERENCE IN BANGKOK FEB 1. HOWEVER, THIS IS WHITLAM, WARTS AND ALL, A MIXTURE OF STATESMAN AND PRISONER OF HIS OWN ORATORY IN PAST. IF HE COULD FOLLOW HIS OWN ADVICE AND LOOK TO THE FUTURE INSTEAD OF DWELLING ON THE PAST (AS IN SPEECH TO SINGAPORE PRESS CLUB), OUR PROBLEMS WOULD GREATLY DIMINISH, AS WE HAVE FEW LARGE, STRUCTURAL DIFFICULTIES WITH AUSTRALIA. WE WILL PROBABLY HAVE WHITLAM TO DEAL WITH FOR CONSIDERABLE FURTHER TIME (POSSIBILITY OF EARLY GENERAL ELECTIONS HAS ALMOST DISAPPEARED), AND WE NEED TO APPRECIATE AS REALISTICALLY AS POSSIBLE BOTH THE POSITIVE AS WELL AS THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS THAT ANNOY US SO MUCH. END COMMENT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, ALLIANCE, MINISTERIAL VISITS, REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, TROOP REDUCTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 FEB 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974CANBER01019
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: CANBERRA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740219/aaaaarnd.tel
Line Count: 253
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BANGKOK 2046 (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 JUL 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <15 JAN 2003 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DFA EVALUATION OF WHITLAM VISIT TO SOUTHEAST ASIA, JANUARY 28 TO FEBRUARY 13
TAGS: PFOR, AS, (WHITLAM, E GOUGH)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005